

Message Text

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ORIGIN PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 PA-01 SSO-00 CCO-00
/032 R

DRAFTED BY PM/DCA:MPALMER:ILB
APPROVED BY PM - MR. KAHAN
PA/PRESS:JTRATTNER (SUBS)
S/S-O:TGMARTIN

-----020329 041931Z /72

O 041914Z MAY 78 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY HELSINKI IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 113791 TOSEC 050009

HELSINKI FOR LESLIE H. GELB, USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PARM

SUBJECT: BURT ARTICLE ON SALT AGGREGATES

1. "NEW YORK TIMES" MAY 4 CARRIES RICHARD BURT ARTICLE
FRONT PAGE UNDER LEAD "US ACCEPTS PLAN BY SOVIETS TO LIMIT
PLANES AND MISSILES. OVERALL LEVEL OF 2,250 IS SET.
RUSSIANS, IN RETURN, WOULD AGREE TO AMERICAN PLAN FOR
MULTIPLE-WARHEAD MISSILES." AT NOON BRIEFING TODAY, WE
WILL MAKE NO COMMENT AS IN PAST ON GROUNDS WE DO NOT
DISCUSS DETAILS OF ON-GOING SALT NEGOTIATIONS. WE INTEND
TO MAINTAIN THIS POSTURE UNLESS YOU BELIEVE WE SHOULD
RESPOND MORE SPECIFICALLY.

2. BEGIN TEXT:
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"THE UNITED STATES, IN A COMPROMISE ON ONE OF THE LAST FEW
OBSTACLES TO A NEW STRATEGIC ARMS ACCORD, HAS TENTATIVELY
DECIDED TO ACCEPT A SOVIET PROPOSAL THAT WOULD LIMIT EACH
SIDE TO 2,250 LONG-RANGE MISSILES AND BOMBERS THROUGH 1985.

THE TENTATIVE DECISION, WHICH FOR THE FIRST TIME WOULD

EQUALIZE THE SIZE OF STRATEGIC ARSENALS, WAS APPARENTLY MADE LAST WEEK AFTER SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS R. VANCE

RETURNED FROM MOSCOW. OFFICIALS SAID THE UNITED STATES WAS READY TO AGREE TO THE HIGHER OVERALL FIGURE FAVORED BY THE RUSSIANS IF THEY AGREED TO A SEPARATE CEILING OF 1,200 FOR MULTIPLE-WARHEAD MISSILES.

THE OFFICIALS SAID MOSCOW HAD PREVIOUSLY INDICATED THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, AND THE OFFICIALS EXPECT FORMAL AGREEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

SUMMIT MEETING POSSIBLE IN SUMMER

WITH THESE POINTS CLOSE TO RESOLUTION, OFFICIALS SAID, ONLY TWO MAJOR ISSUES STAND IN THE WAY OF A NEW TREATY LIMITING STRATEGIC ARMS. THEY SAID ONE--ON PERMISSIBLE MODERNIZATION OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS--STOOD A GOOD CHANCE OF BEING SETTLED IN COMING WEEKS. THIS WOULD CLEAR THE WAY, THEY SAID, FOR A MEETING THIS SUMMER BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND LEONID I. BREZHNEV, WHO WOULD THEN FOCUS ON THE CONTROVERSY OVER A SOVIET BOMBER KNOWN IN THE WEST AS BACKFIRE.

THE SOVIET UNION IS BELIEVED TO HAVE 2,500 STRATEGIC MISSILES AND BOMBERS, OR 400 MORE THAN THE UNITED STATES IS
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PERMITTED TO HAVE UNDER THE PREVIOUS ARMS LIMITATION PACT, SIGNED IN 1972. UNDER THE NEW LIMIT, THE RUSSIANS WOULD HAVE TO RETIRE 250 MISSILES OR BOMBERS, AND THE AMERICANS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED. OFFICIALS SAID THIS PROVISION MIGHT BE A SELLING POINT IN GAINING SENATE APPROVAL FOR THE TREATY. HOWEVER, THE PROPOSED CEILING IS HIGHER THAN ONE ORIGINALLY SOUGHT BY THE UNITED STATES AND THUS IS STILL LIKELY TO ATTRACT CRITICISM ON CAPITOL HILL.

THE OVERALL SIZE OF STRATEGIC ARSENALS HAS BEEN A SENSITIVE ISSUE SINCE THE 1972 ACCORD, WHICH GAVE THE SOVIET UNION A POTENTIAL 40 PERCENT ADVANTAGE IN MISSILE NUMBERS. THIS LED THE SENATE TO INSIST THAT ANY NEW AGREEMENT PROVIDE FOR EQUALITY.

IN A 1974 MEETING AT VLADIVOSTOK, PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD AND MR. BREZHNEV SET AN EQUAL LIMIT OF 2,400. LATER, SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER SAID THE UNITED STATES WAS DETERMINED TO SEEK A REDUCTION IN THESE LEVELS, BUT NEGOTIATORS FAILED TO REACH AGREEMENT.

IN AN EFFORT TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK, PRESIDENT CARTER A

YEAR AGO PROPOSED OVERALL FORCE LEVELS OF 1,800. THE SOVIET NEGOTIATORS PROMPTLY REJECTED SUCH DRASTIC CUTS WHILE HOLDING OUT THE PROSPECT OF SMALLER REDUCTIONS.

DURING A VISIT BY FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREI A. GROMYKO TO WASHINGTON LAST SEPTEMBER, THE TWO SIDES WERE ABLE TO AGREE ON THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF A NEW TREATY BUT NOT ON THE EXACT CEILINGS. THE UNITED STATES WANTED A LOWER CEILING OF 2,160 ON OVERALL FORCE LEVELS AND 1,200 ON MULTIPLE-WARHEAD MISSILES. THE SOVIET UNION HELD OUT FOR HIGHER LIMITS--2,250 OVERALL AND 1,250 FOR MISSILES WITH MULTIPLE WARHEADS.

TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED BY SOVIETS
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IN RECENT TALKS, MOSCOW WAS SAID TO HAVE OFFERED TWO OPTIONS. "THEY ESSENTIALLY TOLD US THAT THEY WOULD LET US HAVE OUR PREFERRED NUMBER FOR OVERALL NUMBERS OR THE CEILING WE WANTED FOR MISSILES WITH MULTIPLE WARHEADS, BUT NOT BOTH," SAID AN OFFICIAL.

CONFRONTED WITH THIS CHOICE, OFFICIALS SAID, THE UNITED STATES WENT ALONG WITH THE SOVIET OVERALL FIGURE PROVIDED THAT THE RUSSIANS ACCEPTED THE AMERICANS' 1,200 CEILING ON MULTIPLE-WARHEAD MISSILES.

TO CEMENT THIS ARRANGEMENT, OFFICIALS SAID, THE TWO SIDES WILL HAVE TO AGREE ON EXACTLY WHAT FORCES ARE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE TREATY. TO EASE THE PROBLEM, THE UNITED STATES IS SAID TO HAVE RECENTLY AGREED THAT 50 SOVIET BOMBERS THAT ARE NOW USED AS TANKERS OR FOR NAVAL MISSIONS WOULD NOT BE INCLUDED. ADDITIONAL SPECIFICATIONS MUST STILL BE RESOLVED BEFORE THE CEILING CAN BE FORMALLY ADOPTED, BUT THE OFFICIALS SAID THEY EXPECTED LITTLE TROUBLE.

AN AGREEMENT ON TOTAL NUMBERS IS EXPECTED TO GIVE NEW MOMENTUM TO THE NEGOTIATIONS UNDER WAY IN GENEVA AND PERHAPS LEAD TO FURTHER AGREEMENT LATER THIS MONTH WHEN MR. VANCE IS EXPECTED TO MEET WITH MR. GROMYKO IN NEW YORK. DURING MR. VANCE'S VISIT TO MOSCOW, SOME PROGRESS IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN MADE ON THE ISSUE OF WHAT NEW MISSILES COULD BE DEPLOYED AND HOW FAR EXISTING SYSTEMS COULD BE MODERNIZED.

ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS, THE UNITED STATES, IN A SHIFT FROM ITS PREVIOUS POSITION, WAS PREPARED TO LET THE SOVIET
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UNION DEPLOY A NEW, SINGLE-WARHEAD, LAND-BASED MISSILE IF WASHINGTON WAS ALLOWED TO GO AHEAD WITH A NEW LAND-BASED MISSILE EQUIPPED WITH MULTIPLE WARHEADS. MOSCOW DID NOT IMMEDIATELY ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL, THEY SAID, BUT IT HAS YET TO BE OFFICIALLY TURNED DOWN.

AT THE SAME TIME, THEY REPORTED LITTLE PROGRESS ON THE CONTROVERSIAL BOMBER ISSUE. THE AMERICANS ARE STILL ASKING RESTRICTIONS ON DEPLOYMENT, REFUELING AND TRAINING PROCEDURES FOR THE BACKFIRE, WHICH IT VIEWS AS CAPABLE OF REACHING THE UNITED STATES. THE SOVIET NEGOTIATORS, WHO HAVE BEEN INSISTING THAT THE BACKFIRE DOES NOT HAVE SUCH A LONG-RANGE POTENTIAL, ARE SAID TO BE WILLING ONLY TO SUPPLY THE FLIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLANE AND TO PROMISE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE USED TO ATTACK THE UNITED STATES.

EVEN BEFORE IT WAS LEARNED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE SOVIET PROPOSAL ON OVERALL FORCE LEVELS, ALL REPUBLICAN SENATORS JOINED IN A STATEMENT TODAY ATTACKING CONCESSIONS IN THE ARMS NEGOTIATIONS AND ACCUSING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION OF SEEKING ANY TREATY IT CAN GET, REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES.

SENATOR JOHN G. TOWER OF TEXAS, HEAD OF THE GROUP THAT PRODUCED THE STATEMENT, SAID CURRENT TRENDS WOULD PRODUCE "A TREATY WHICH WOULD PLACE THE UNITED STATES AT A STRATEGIC DISADVANTAGE."

REPUBLICAN COMPLAINTS AREA LISTED

SENATOR HOWARD H. BAKER, JR., THE MINORITY LEADER, SAID HE FEARED THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD YIELD A TREATY THAT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO HIM AND MOST SENATE REPUBLICANS. BOTH SENATORS PREDICTED THAT THE TREATY WOULD BE AN ISSUE IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS.

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THE 30-PAGE STATEMENT SAID FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY WAS CHARACTERIZED BY "INCOHERENCE, INCONSISTENCY AND INEPTITUDE" NOT ONLY IN THE ARMS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, BUT ALSO IN THE DECISION TO ABANDON THE B-1 BOMBER "WITHOUT ASKING OR GETTING ANYTHING IN RETURN" AND IN THE DELAY ON THE MX MISSILE.

IN THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES, THE REPUBLICANS SAID, THE
UNITED STATES DROPPED A DEMAND FOR A LIMIT OF 150 ON SOVIET
HEAVY MISSILES, OF 550 MULTIPLE-WARHEAD MISSILES, AND A
LIMIT ON FLIGHT TESTS OF INTERCONTINENTAL MISSILES."

END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, TOSEC, SALT (ARMS CONTROL)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE113791
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MPALMER:ILB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780191-0266
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780592/aaaadarh.tel
Line Count: 231
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a5d798a4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2790363
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BURT ARTICLE ON SALT AGGREGATES
TAGS: PARM, SOPN, US, UR, NEW YORK TIMES, (BURT, RICHARD)
To: SECRETARY HELSINKI MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a5d798a4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014